

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**A**N EDUCATED CITIZENRY IS THE CORNERSTONE of a democratic society, and for our democracy to prosper, our youth must demonstrate both academic achievement and civic responsibility. The Superintendent's Service-Learning Task Force, convened by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin in 1997, envisions an education for all California students where knowledge and participation intersect to engage youth as vital community members. Service-learning is a proven teaching and learning strategy that inspires young people to learn about and serve their communities through experiences directly tied to their school curriculum. Therefore, the task force believes that every school, in partnership with its community, must provide ongoing, integrated service-learning for all students.

America's young people want to learn how to read and do mathematics, but they also want to understand where they fit in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. They hear that school prepares them for the future, but it is difficult for them to envision what that future looks like. They yearn to find solutions to the problems that face our state, our nation, and the world that they will inherit. Young people look for meaning and ask, How is what I am learning today preparing me for tomorrow?

Service-learning provides an answer to that question.

- In Los Angeles, high school students studying health issues researched the effects of tobacco use and prepared lessons for middle school students on that topic. The high school students

administered a pretest to determine how much factual information the younger students knew and then, as a group, the older students presented the lessons. After the presentations, the high school students administered a post-test to determine how effective their lessons were and whether the younger students' attitudes had changed.

- In Los Molinos, high school students interviewed local historians to learn more about the history of Tehama County. The students did extensive research in history class, created new displays for the Tehama Museum, and worked as docents on the weekends, sharing their new knowledge of local history with visitors.
- In Oakland, middle grade students identified issues that were of great concern to them but were not being discussed. The issues included use of illegal drugs, early pregnancy, child abuse, alcoholism, peer pressure, smoking, and gang violence. In language arts class the students formed groups, each of which researched one of the topics. Then each student wrote an article about a topic. The essays were compiled into a booklet called "Kids Speak Out," which the students presented during a school assembly. A class set of booklets was prepared for the school library.
- In Bakersfield, kindergarten students identified the problem of too many trees being cut down or neglected. After learning about trees from books and local experts, the children counted the diseased trees in their neighborhood. They decided to tell people to take care of the trees. With help from their teachers, the kindergartners

wrote a play about the importance of trees and performed it for their parents and community members.

Through service-learning these students studied the curriculum and used what they were learning to contribute to their communities.

In learning to write an effective essay or to play a musical instrument, one must first understand the basic theory and then practice the skills needed to achieve excellence. So it is with learning about democracy and one's community. Young people must have both the knowledge and the opportunity to apply their knowledge through practice. They

## The Definition of Service-Learning

Service-learning was clearly defined in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 signed into law by President George Bush. The act, reauthorized in 1993 as the National and Community Service Trust Act, was signed by President Bill Clinton.

The term "service-learning" is defined as a method—

(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that—(i) is conducted in and meets the needs of a community; (ii) is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and (iii) helps foster civic responsibility; and

(B) that —(i) is integrated into and enhances the [core] academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and (ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.

*U.S. Code (annotated)*. Vol. 10401–12700, Title 42, Section 12511, Chapter 23 (1995).

must learn that in a strong and lasting democracy, all members participate and share the belief that life is as much about giving as about getting, as much about responsibilities as about rights. Service-learning offers the framework through which students can discover those principles.

***“In a democratic society  
we must live cooperatively, and  
serve the community in which we  
live, to the best of our ability. For  
our own success to be real,  
it must contribute to the  
success of others.”***

Eleanor Roosevelt

## The Goals for Implementing Service-Learning in California

In 1996 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin established goals for implementing service-learning in California:

- By the year 2000, 25 percent of California's 994 school districts should offer all students at least one community service or service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve) for a minimum of three opportunities throughout their kindergarten through grade twelve education.
- By the year 2004, 50 percent of California school districts should offer all students at least one service-learning opportunity at each grade span (kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve).

## The Recommendations of the Service-Learning Task Force

The Service-Learning Task Force embraces the Superintendent's goals, but its members believe that multiple service-learning experiences must occur at each grade span and even at each grade level. To achieve these goals, the task force makes the following eight major recommendations:

- Develop policies and plans to ensure that all students have academically meaningful, sequential, and sustained service-learning experiences throughout their schooling.
- Link service-learning to state and local standards, assessments, and accountability tools.
- Work collaboratively with community partners and national service providers, such as AmeriCorps and VISTA, to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear, service is meaningful, and all partners are committed to success.
- Give youth a voice in their education by involving them fully in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning activities.
- Establish a local service-learning advisory committee or include service-learning representatives on existing school and district advisory committees.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development for teachers, administrators, community partners, students, and family members so that everyone understands service-learning.
- Provide adequate funding, resources, and time to infuse service-learning fully in schools and communities.
- Include service-learning as a vital instructional strategy in teacher education programs.

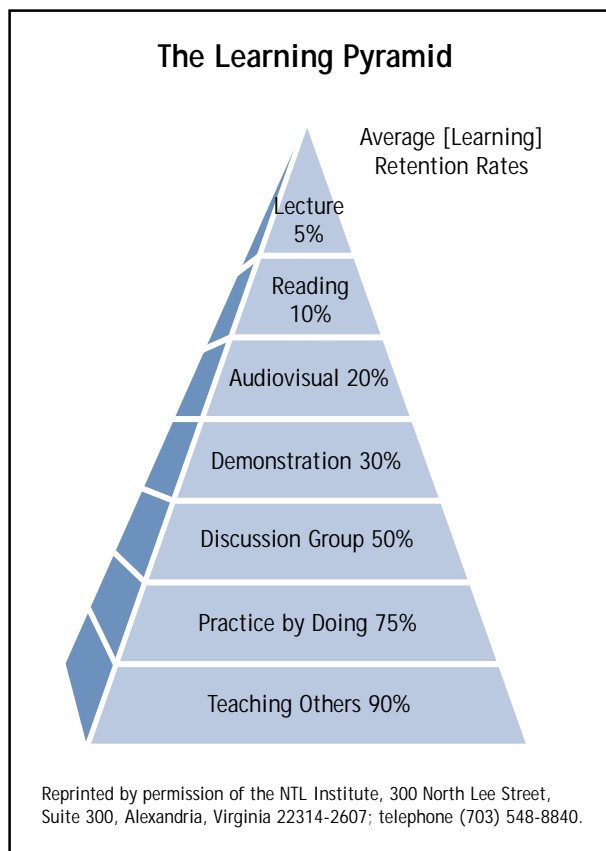
The result of implementing these recommendations is that California's youth will:

- Understand the relevance of what they are learning in school and apply the knowledge and skills to the world outside the school.
- Remember and use the content information and skills that they learned in class through service-learning.
- Have an improved understanding of their role as citizens in a democratic society.
- Understand that every community has needs that are often unmet and learn how to identify those needs.
- Develop an ethic of providing service to others and to their community.
- Understand that working with other people as a team is often an effective way of addressing issues and solving community problems.
- Reflect on their service experiences and on the effect of those experiences on the lives of people they served or on their own lives.

## Service-Learning Benefits Students, Schools, and Communities

Since the world outside the school moves more rapidly than the one inside the classroom, many youth seem uninterested in their education. The Service-Learning Task Force believes that young people learn best when they connect their learning to something meaningful (Caine and Caine 1997). The strongest attachment that most people have is to their community, which includes their families and friends. When youth and adults are involved in activities that link classrooms and communities, the level of learning is deeper than that in the classroom alone. Teachers who use service-learning have found that their students become eager participants in the learning process.

“The Learning Pyramid” below shows various methods for teaching curriculum content and the learning retention rates resulting from each method.



Service-learning primarily uses the methods of “practice by doing” and “teaching others,” both of which yield the highest learning retention rates.

Additionally, research shows that in schools where teachers use service-learning, a positive effect develops in relationships among students, among teachers, between the teachers and students, and between administrators and teachers. These schools were also successful in attracting community interest and support (Weiler and others 1998, 66).

Research also indicates that communities benefit from services provided by students through service-learning. Organizations with which students worked gave high marks to both the quality of the services provided by the students and the impact of the service on the recipients and the agencies themselves. In particular, agencies that were involved in service-learning offered more or improved services to their communities (Melchior and others 1997, 37–47).

***“Everyone can be great  
because anyone can serve.”***

Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Service-Learning Is More Than Community Service

Service-learning links community work directly to classroom learning. While community service has long been a part of school activities through service clubs, student government, and leadership activities, it is often an “add-on” that is not integrated into the core curriculum.

Youth may have opportunities in school to participate in one-time community service work, such as collecting canned food for the needy at Christmas. However, service-learning can make this simple service activity an educational experience. Using

the cans collected, students can study weights and measures in mathematics, or they can graph the number of cans in each weight category and display their findings on a wall chart. As part of the health curriculum, students can analyze the nutritional value of the food collected and try to plan a balanced meal using those items.

There is a place in schools for both community service and service-learning. Service club activities and schoolwide service projects, such as walkathons for charities, can introduce students to issues in society and create an awareness of one's responsibility to the larger community. Often these community service activities act as a starting point toward fully integrating service-learning as a method of teaching the curriculum, a strategy that should be the goal of schools and districts.

***“Young people tell me that helping others makes them feel good about themselves. Often, they tell me that it does much more than that: it boosts their self-confidence; it offers them the chance to pick up useful skills; and it lets them exercise real responsibility and leadership at an early age. Young people have actually found their life’s work through a give-back experience.”***

General Colin Powell

Unfortunately, the term “community service” is often used to refer to court-ordered community service. Over the years, community service has developed a negative connotation in some places because it is used as a punitive measure. Persons who commit minor infractions against the law are often assigned community service as restitution. Picking up garbage along the highway or shelving books in the local public library have become ways for individuals to fulfill the court sentences for community service. Even in elementary schools, students who get in trouble on the playground may

get “community service” to pay for their misbehavior. Characterizing these types of assignments as “compensatory service” would help to remove any negative connotation associated with “community service.”

## **Service-Learning Should Be Encouraged, Not Mandated**

The Service-Learning Task Force does not recommend state legislation that would mandate community service or service-learning as a high school graduation requirement. The task force does, however, encourage local school boards to recommend service-learning as a teaching strategy. Each local school board should review the research about service-learning and community service work and determine the district policies regarding service that match the district's goals.

Service-learning allows students to participate in meaningful ways. Research shows that “school policies that *required* community service did not appear to have much impact” with students (Nolin and others 1997, 17). On the other hand, when teenagers were *asked to volunteer*, a majority actually did participate, lending credence to the idea that schools may have substantial influence by simply offering or arranging service activities (Nolin and others 1997, 15).

Service-learning works best when teachers want to use it (Wade 1997). Some teachers may not find service-learning a comfortable teaching strategy, while others may consider it natural. School districts should expose all teachers to information about service-learning, identify those who are the most enthusiastic about it, and provide them with resources and training.

The task force also believes that California State University and University of California admission requirements should be enhanced to include service-learning. California's universities need to

recognize that the ability of young people to use knowledge and to serve their communities has as much value as does the ability to acquire knowledge itself.

***“Let us pledge to restore in our time the American spirit of voluntary service, of cooperation, of citizen action, of private and community initiative, a spirit that flows like a deep and mighty river through the heart of the history of this nation.”***

Ronald Reagan

Taken together, the eight recommendations presented in this report will infuse service-learning into California’s schools and communities. Each of the recommendations is described in more detail in the following chapters.

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# Chatom Fifth-Graders Add Gusto to Christmas Giving

By Robert Adams  
The Journal

Many classes in several area schools are helping others in need at this time of year, but there's one Chatom School class whose students are giving even when some of their families are as desperate for help as anyone else.

Joanne Garcia's fifth-grade class has seized the opportunity to help those less fortunate with gusto, working on the project since the school year began.

They have collected 354 cans in that time and made a can tree out of them. At the same time they've made the social effort into an academic exercise.

Twenty families at the school will be helped by the donations, selected by teachers at the school. Garcia's class has students from five of those families.

The class donation is part of an accumulation of gifts from all 32 classes on campus.

The families will receive the donations today. The donations will be made anonymously, and some of Garcia's students will learn that while they were working to make Christmas better for their peers, their families were actually the ones who would be helped.

Garcia said the students have enjoyed the opportunity to help others. She noted that it is exceptional for the children who come from low-income families to want to bring their food from home to give as a donation.

"They are proud of themselves because they can see that what they are doing is making a difference in someone else's life. They are so enthused I think they drink, sleep, and think this all the time. This is just a stepping stone, and they now have the feeling

that they can conquer the world, that they can do anything," Garcia said.

Ashley Souza and Jonathan Jones, classmates in Garcia's room and co-presidents of the school's student council, said it feels good to help the community.

"When I open presents on Christmas, it will make me feel good to know that somebody else has something for Christmas because of what we've done," Souza said.

Jones said the students have worked for several months on a presentation that they have given several times to community members and dignitaries, such as the Chatom School District Board of Trustees, who have come into their classroom to find out about the charitable effort. Each student has a role.

In addition to learning about the joy of giving to others, the students have learned about nutrition, weights, graphs, reading, and writing.

Student Stephanie Faria said the pupils weighed all of the cans and came up with a total of 408 pounds.

They made graphs to show how many cans of each type of food—whether it be corn, peas, spinach or beans—they had so that each family received an equal amount of the different types of food received. They also made a chart of the ingredients in each can, learning what's healthy and what's not. For example, the students now know that a high level of sodium makes a food unhealthy.

They also learned they needed to throw out all of the dented cans because the dents let air inside the cans, which causes bacteria to grow.

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